

HOUSTON VALUE PRICING PILOT PROGRAM

QUICKRIDE NON-USER SURVEY

ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS

Prepared for the

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Houston Division

And the

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF HARRIS COUNTY
Houston, Texas

Prepared by

TEXAS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
College Station, Texas

April 2004

**SUMMARY - ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS
QUICKRIDE NON-USER SURVEY**

QuickRide (QR) is a value pricing program to more effectively utilize the capacity of the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on the Katy (I-10) and Northwest (US 290) freeways in Houston. Under this program, drivers with a single passenger can pay \$2.00 to use the HOV lane during the peak period, even though the lane is normally restricted to vehicles with three or more occupants. This form of high-occupancy / toll (HOT) lane is used as a travel demand management and congestion mitigation tool. The HOV lane sponsors, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO), and the Federal Highway Administration are evaluating possible changes to the QuickRide program. The changes may include expanding the hours for QuickRide eligibility, introducing variable tolls to manage congestion, and allowing single occupant vehicles (SOV) access to the HOV lane with a toll.

Survey of Commuters

A survey of freeway commuters (other than existing QuickRide users) was conducted in November 2003 to gather information about the commute travel patterns, socio-economic characteristics, and opinions of proposed changes in the QuickRide program. A total of 15,240 surveys were distributed, representing 28 percent of the estimated 55,000 commuters traveling Katy or Northwest Freeways during the peak periods. Surveys were distributed to commuters in four target markets: main lanes, HOV lane, transit riders, and casual carpoolers. A total of 3,505 surveys were returned, which provided a 23 percent survey response rate. The surveys returned represent 6.4 percent of all commuters traveling Katy or Northwest Freeways during the peak periods – about 1 in every 16 commuters.

Majority of Survey Respondents Include Written Comments

Each survey gave the respondent the opportunity to write in comments in response to the following question: “Please list any comments or suggestions you have regarding travel in the [Katy or Northwest] corridor.” Over one-half of all survey respondents included written comments.

Surveys with Written Comments by Mode and by Corridor

Mode	Katy Freeway (IH 10)	Northwest Freeway (US 290)	Total with Written Comments	% Surveys with Written Comments
Main Lanes	512	590	1,102	52%
HOV Lane (not QR)	141	202	343	59%
Transit	180	117	297	51%
Casual Carpools	88	58	146	68%
Total	921	967	1,888	54%

Source: ASPShare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\COPY of Copy of Cleaned Data Base-B_4.1.04

Of the 1,888 survey respondents who added at least one written note on a topic, 25 percent wrote comments about two topics and 9 percent wrote comments about three or more topics. A total of

2,676 comments were analyzed (a maximum of three per survey). Whether about one or several topics, the comments were often lengthy and reflected thoughtful consideration of the survey topics. Several respondents offered to discuss their ideas further and included a personal mailing address, telephone number, or email address. A number of surveys were written with emphasis added by capitalization of words and exclamation marks. In a few surveys, the writers used expletives to indicate strong opinion or annoyance. Many respondents took the opportunity to report a good experience or constructive suggestion to improve travel on the freeway.

The comments from survey respondents were analyzed to improve our understanding of public opinion and anticipate possible reaction to changes in the QuickRide program. The underlying assumption is that survey respondents who add comments care enough, or feel strongly enough, to take the additional time to express their thoughts and opinions in writing – and may express their thoughts (more likely, opposition) to proposed changes in the QuickRide program in the future. Each survey respondent represents as many as 16 commuters.

General Commuter Frustration

The survey comments reflect the sense of frustration of commuters about traffic. The survey respondents want something done to provide relief to traffic congestion, particularly in the peak periods. The comments included suggestions, many practical and some perhaps unrealistic, of how to solve the traffic congestion problems. Examples of the 282 comments about traffic literally express desperation: “Do anything! Just do something!” “We are moving from Houston because of our commutes to work – It’s unbearable.” “The congestion is horrendous. Do something about it. Now.” The comments are made about both Katy IH-10 and Northwest 290, for example: “Other than I-10, US 290 is the worst in Houston and my last choice for travel.”

METRO is the Topic for Many Comments

A total of 292 survey respondents made comments referencing METRO. Comments were made about METRO plans or services by survey respondents of every mode. The most comments were made by transit riders, although commuters in the main lanes and casual carpoolers also contributed many comments. Overall, about 22 percent of all comments (65 comments) about METRO are complimentary or request increased service levels. Twenty-five percent of comments (73 comments) about METRO requested new or improved transit service to specific destinations. Ten percent of comments about METRO are suggestions to improve service or say the respondent would use transit if (Buses were more convenient to ride, would take me directly to my work, etc.).

Almost half (42 percent) of comments about METRO are complaints – 124 total. The majority of critical comments are specifically about afternoon peak period bus service: buses not operating on time and over-crowded buses. Other complaints were about park & ride fares being too high for the quality of service, the condition of buses (either interior comfort or quality of maintenance), opposition to intermediate stops at the Northwest Transit Center, the performance of drivers, and specific comments about problems getting home one evening after floods interrupted transit.

Awareness/Sensitivity about Regional Transportation Issues

The written comments to the survey evidence general awareness of the various regional debates about transportation problems and solutions. Many comments make specific reference to opinion on a recent issue or about the particular performance of a public agency. Topics often referenced include TxDOT plans to expand Katy Freeway (including plans to include tolled lanes), the METRO rail referendum, Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) congestion levels and toll rate increases, and flood control. Some comments also reference the public debates between local and national elected officials on the future of transportation in Harris County. At least in part, the survey comments about HOV lane operation or about the QuickRide program are influenced by the respondent's opinion about other local or regional transportation issues. Commuters in the Katy and Northwest corridors have a heightened sensitivity to transportation issues. The sensitivity is likely to increase with the progress of construction to expand the Katy Freeway.

Support for Rail

The number of commuters who expressed an interest in rail was significant – 281 survey respondents volunteered suggestions in favor of rail as a better commute mode choice. A total of 180 of the 281 comments were from commuters in the main lanes. Only 14 survey respondents made comments totally in opposition to rail – however, comments both in favor or opposed to rail were unsolicited. The survey was not about rail and did not solicit comments on rail. The interest in rail is in part a reflection of attention to the METRO rail referendum in November 2003 but may also indicate the desire of commuters to have alternatives to traveling along congested freeways.

Interest in Expediting Freeway Expansion

Many survey respondents support adding capacity to freeways in the expectation that more freeway lanes will resolve traffic congestion. Comments indicate that commuters are anxious to move, to get something done. Several of the comments specifically mentioned expediting freeway construction for the Katy Freeway expansion project. The following comment summarizes effectively the opinion of about 169 survey respondents: “Bigger Freeway-more lanes!! Now!!” Sixteen survey respondents specifically mentioned opposition to adding freeway lanes for the Katy Freeway. As was the case about rail, this survey was not about freeway expansion and did not solicit comments on adding lanes to the freeway.

Comments for TxDOT

Many survey comments address regional transportation and freeways, in particular. Thirty-one comments were addressed specifically to TxDOT. Of the total, 27 comments were from commuters using the main lanes. In general, comments were about congestion caused by construction, problems created at entrance and exits when traffic from the freeway conflicts with traffic on the frontage road, and safety concerns about merging traffic especially at major freeway interchanges (I-10 and I-610).

Generally Positive Opinion of HOV Lanes

Generally positive comments about HOV lanes and carpools/vanpools were made by 181 survey respondents, some from each mode, including 80 commuters in the main lanes. Forty-nine of the 52 comments that are opposed to HOV lanes are made by commuters in the main lanes.

Opinions about QuickRide

Comments about QuickRide are both positive and negative by survey respondents from all modes. There are 78 comments in favor of QuickRide as a concept. See also comments in favor of SOV on HOV – many survey respondents indicate their support for QuickRide is specifically support for allowing SOV access to the HOV. Examples of comments in favor of QuickRide are: “Traffic during peak hours is torture! QuickRide is awesome!” “I like the QuickRide option. Charging a toll is a fair price to pay for convenience.”

Comments indicating opposition referenced either QuickRide in concept or specifically the idea of charging for access to the HOV lane for vehicles with fewer than 3 persons. A total of 225 comments were made opposed to QuickRide or charging tolls. Examples of comments include: “I do not believe anyone should be able to pay to use the HOV lanes. You should require 3 or more riders in all cars” “Charging people on HOV and requiring 3+ on HOV only causes MORE traffic on the regular lanes. Why do this to commuters?” “I pay too much property taxes and will not pay more just to use the full HOV lane;” “Though I can afford a QuickRide Program, I oppose it as another program that benefits the wealthy.”

Comments about QuickRide or Tolls for Access to HOV/Freeway

	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Support for QuickRide	51	18	6	3	78
Oppose QuickRide or Oppose Tolls to Access HOV	126	61	21	17	225

Source: ASPShare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\COPY of Copy of Cleaned Data Base-B_4.1.04

The full survey included two questions about QuickRide variable tolls that all survey answered.

Responses to Survey Key Questions	Percent of Responses by Mode				Percent of All Answers
	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit	Casual Carpool	
To maintain a smooth traffic flow, the QuickRide toll could change with the time of day.					
What is your initial feeling regarding this option?					
Favor	44%	38%	43%	N/A	43%
Indifferent	22%	17%	24%	N/A	21%
Oppose	34%	46%	33%	N/A	36%
The QuickRide toll could also change with the amount of traffic in the HOV lane.					
What is your initial feeling regarding this option?					
Favor	30%	26%	31%	N/A	30%
Indifferent	19%	13%	19%	N/A	18%
Oppose	51%	60%	50%	N/A	52%

*Source: QR Non-User Survey Data Analysis.xls * Total 3,505 surveys returned*

The comments by survey respondents indicate that at least some commuters do not favor variable pricing because there is a lack of confidence the concept can be implemented successfully. One survey respondent wrote: “You are going to sit on the road and change the toll after counting cars? How can you tell how congested it is? That doesn’t even sound feasible. Not a good idea-make it too congested. What are you thinking? I know \$\$\$-never mind how crowded it gets.”

Opposition to Charging for Freeway Access

Some survey respondents who wrote comments expressed an opposition to charging for access to the freeway, or specifically to the interstate highway. For example, one survey respondent wrote: “We pay enough in taxes. I don’t care for the idea of paying more money to travel on the roads that my tax dollars should be providing already.” Another commuter was more demonstrative: “To charge for road use is fraud and stealing. Politics! I will find another route if charged!” A total of 65 survey respondents wrote to oppose charging for access to the freeway, 51 were commuters from the main lanes.

Opinions about SOV Access to the HOV Lane

Comments by survey respondents reflected strong opinion (either for or against) about the idea of allowing SOV access to the HOV. The majority of opinions in favor of SOV access to HOV were from the main lanes; however, comments opposed to SOV were from all modes.

The opinions about SOV access to the HOV lane reflect the most emotional comments – especially from commuters in the HOV lane, transit riders, and casual carpoolers who are opposed to SOV access. Survey respondents in favor of SOV access wrote comments similar to the following: “Sometimes but not all the time I would gladly pay a toll to use the HOV. It depends on the congestion and if I need to be somewhere in a hurry.” “People are not going away. We must provide much better public transportation to solve this problem. Allowing single people to drive HOV would be used occasionally by everyone, and make sense.”

Comments opposing SOV in the HOV lane included the following examples: “Do not prefer this option at all! It defeats the purpose of the HOV lane. This would be the same as giving a HOV freeway lane to the rich.” “HOV stands for high occupancy vehicles right?! If you start letting people on who drive alone, what is the use? I am opposed to a plan that allows for single passenger cars on the HOV lane.” “I am irate about QuickRide. It will become so congested that no one will benefit from HOV lane except METRO. Where was the vote on this decision?”

Comments about Allowing SOV Access to HOV

	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Favor SOV Access to HOV	62	8	4	3	77
Oppose SOV on HOV	40	65	26	23	154

Source: ASPShare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\COPY of Copy of Cleaned Data Base-B_4.1.04

The full survey included one question about SOV access to the HOV that all survey respondents for main lanes, HOV lane, transit riders, and casual carpoolers answered. The majority of commuters in the main lanes favor SOV access to the HOV lane. A majority of every other mode

(HOV lane, transit riders, and carpools) oppose SOV access to the HOV lane. Approximately 35,500 peak period commuters are in the main lanes; about 19,500 peak period commuters travel by transit or carpool in the HOV lane.

Responses to Survey Key Question	Percent of Responses by Mode				Percent of All Answers
	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit	Casual Carpool	
How do you feel about allowing people who drive alone to use the HOV lane for a higher toll than carpools?					
Favor	56%	38%	40%	15%	48%
Indifferent	11%	7%	9%	8%	10%
Oppose	33%	55%	52%	77%	43%

Source: *QR Non-User Survey Data Analysis.xls*

* Total 3,505 surveys returned

Please note that the question did not specify what time of day SOV access would be permitted, nor did the question link SOV access to level of congestion.

Uncertainty about Agency Responsibility and Use of QuickRide Tolls

There is uncertainty, even confusion, about agency responsibility for HOV lanes and the QuickRide program. References by survey respondents about responsibility include METRO, Harris County, HCTRA, TxDOT and the City (of Houston).

The purpose and use of the toll revenues for QuickRide are not understood. The comments suggest an underlying assumption that toll revenues are significant. One commuter wrote: "I think the QuickRide fund allocation needs to be clear. If you are using the funds to improve 290, great. If it goes to somewhere else, why should people pay if you are going to spend money on some other program?" Another survey respondent wrote: "I would only support a toll and congested-priced toll road on IH-10 if net income went to public transit, not to HCTRA." A number of comments expressed opposition to the idea that QuickRide toll is proposed for the purpose of generating revenues. One example is: "The ideas suggested by this survey communicate that METRO merely wants to generate revenue by allowing single occupant vehicles to use the HOV lane and not promote HOV efficiency. What does this truly accomplish? METRO suggests income, but does it really help our traffic congestion issues? No, it does not."

Concern about Enforcement for HOV Lane

A number of survey respondents (145 comments), most from the main lanes and HOV lane, added comments about enforcement of the HOV lane restrictions or about the vehicle (user) categories currently eligible for HOV access. Example comments include: "A lot of vehicles have been violating the HOV lanes. There should be more police to enforce the law." "There are always single people in the HOV lane. The METRO police should be out there more often." "There is too much HOV abuse in the non barricaded areas!"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PURPOSE	1
SURVEY OVERVIEW	1
METHODOLOGY	4
DATA SUMMARY	5
FINDINGS	9
Awareness of Regional Transportation Issues	9
Uncertainty about Agency Responsibility	9
Comments Referencing METRO	10
Comments about Rail	14
Comments about Traffic in General	16
Expanding the Freeway Lanes to Relieve Congestion	17
Suggestions of Other Ways to Improve Traffic.....	18
Opinions about HOV Lanes	19
Opinions about QuickRide or Charging Tolls for Access to HOV/Freeway	20
Opinions about Single Occupant Vehicle (SOV) Access to the HOV Lane	23
Concern about Enforcement HOV	26
Other Comments.....	27
Most Frequent Comments by Mode	29
STRATEGY for PUBLIC INFORMATION	33
Seize the Opportunity	33
Surprise No One	33
Demonstrate Agency Cooperation	33
Explain, Explain, Explain.....	34
Manage Expectations	34

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – Survey Response by Mode and by Corridor	2
Table 2 – Survey Response Rates by Mode	2
Table 3 – Survey Response as Percent of Commuters by Mode and Total	3
Table 4 – Survey Response by Mail or Web Site	3
Table 5 – Written Comments by Mode and by Corridor	4
Table 6 – Number of Comments per Respondent by Mode.....	4
Table 7 – Summary of Written Comments by Category for All Survey Respondents	6
Table 8 – Summary of Comments by Category and Mode for All Survey Respondents	7
Table 9 – Survey Responses to Key Questions about QuickRide and SOV Access to HOV Lane	8
Table 10 – Survey Written Comments about QuickRide and SOV Access to HOV Lane.....	8
Table 11 – Comments Referencing METRO.....	10
Table 12 – Positive Comments about METRO	11
Table 13 – Requests for METRO Service	12
Table 14 – Complaints about METRO Service	13
Table 15 – Comments about Rail.....	14
Table 16 – Comments about Traffic in General.....	16
Table 17 – Opinions about Expanding the Freeway to Relieve Congestion.....	17
Table 18 – Suggestions to Improve Traffic	18
Table 19 – Opinions about HOV Lanes.....	19
Table 20 – Opinions about QuickRide or Tools for Access to HOV/Freeway.....	20
Table 21 – Opinions about SOV Access to the HOV Lane	23
Table 22 – Comments about Enforcement of the HOV Lanes	26
Table 23 – Other Topics of Comments by Survey Respondents	27
Table 24 – Comment Summary of Commuters in Main Lanes	29
Table 25 – Comment Summary of Commuters in HOV Lane.....	30
Table 26 – Comment Summary of Transit Riders	31
Table 27 – Comment Summary of Casual Carpoolers.....	32

QUICKRIDE NON-USER SURVEY ANALYSIS OF SURVEY WRITTEN COMMENTS

PURPOSE

QuickRide (QR) is a value pricing program to more effectively utilize the capacity of the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on the Katy (I-10) and Northwest (US 290) freeways in Houston. Under this program, drivers with a single passenger can pay \$2.00 to use the HOV lane during the peak period, even though the lane is normally restricted to vehicles with three or more occupants. This form of high-occupancy / toll (HOT) lane is used as a travel demand management and congestion mitigation tool. The HOV lane sponsors, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO), and the Federal Highway Administration, are evaluating possible changes to the QuickRide program. The changes may include expanding the hours for QuickRide eligibility, introducing variable tolls to manage congestion, and allowing single occupant vehicles (SOV) access to the HOV lane with a toll.

A survey of freeway commuters was conducted in November 2003 to gather information about the commute travel patterns, socio-economic characteristics, and opinions of proposed changes in the QuickRide program. This paper examines the comments from survey respondents to improve our understanding of public opinion and anticipate possible reaction to changes in the QuickRide program.

The following discussion is not a statistical analysis of the responses to survey questions. Rather, this paper specifically looks at the content and tone of written comments to better understand commuter opinions. The underlying assumption is that survey respondents who add comments care enough, or feel strongly enough, to take the additional time to express their thoughts and opinions in writing. While the numbers of survey comments reflecting a particular point of view are often cited in the discussion that follows, the conclusions are based on qualitative evaluation.

SURVEY OVERVIEW

The survey was distributed to four categories of commuters (modes) on the Katy and Northwest freeways according to mode of travel. The commuter modes include travel in the main lanes, travel in the HOV lane (not QuickRide)¹, transit riders, and casual carpoolers. The methods of distribution were direct mailing to commuters driving in the main lanes and HOV lanes, on-board surveys for transit riders, and hand distribution to casual carpoolers. All commute mode groups had the option to access and complete the survey on-line. Both inbound and outbound commuters were surveyed in each mode group, except casual carpoolers who were distributed surveys at park & ride lots for the morning inbound commute. The surveys were distributed in November 2003. Surveys returned or completed on-line by the second week of December are included in the analysis.

¹ A survey of QuickRide users in the HOV lane was conducted in March 2003 and is the subject of separate analyses.

The survey design was similar for each mode group. The questions were most common for main lanes, HOV lanes and transit riders. The questions were modified for the casual carpoolers to gather specific information about this relatively unique mode choice. The survey included questions asking about characteristics of the most recent commute trip, knowledge of the QuickRide program, feelings toward alternate QuickRide schemes, and socio-economic characteristics of the respondent. Each survey also included four stated preference questions asking about the choice of commute given options of mode, travel time, and toll. The survey ended with an open-ended question: “Please list any comments or suggestions you have regarding travel in the [Katy or Northwest] corridor.” Some survey respondents also wrote comments in the margins beside specific questions.

The numbers of survey responses by mode and by corridor are provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Survey Response by Mode and by Corridor

Mode	Northwest		Total Responses
	Katy Freeway (IH 10)	Freeway (US 290)	
Main Lanes	996	1,125	2,121
HOV Lane (not QR)	239	345	584
Transit	368	216	584
Casual Carpools	135	81	216
Total	1,738	1,767	3,505

Source: QR Non-User Survey Data Analysis.xls

Twenty-one percent of all commuters who received the survey returned the questionnaire or completed a survey electronically. The survey response rates by mode are provided in Table 2.

Table 2
Survey Response Rate by Mode
Katy (I-10) and Northwest (US 290) Combined

Mode	No. Surveys Handed/Mailed	No. Responses²	Response Rate
Main Lanes	8,670	2,121	24%
HOV Lane (not QR)	6,791	584	9%
Transit (~10% refusal)	700	584	83%
Casual Carpools (~7% refusal)	540	216	40%
Total	16,701	3,505	21%

Sources: TRB 04 - SP Survey.ppt and QR Non-User Survey Data Analysis.xls

The number of surveys distributed for the non-user survey represented about 30 percent of all commuters in the target markets, as shown in Table 3. The surveys completed and returned represent 6.4 percent of all commuters, or about 1 in every 16 commuters.

² Includes responses returned by mail, returned on-board transit, or submitted electronically.

Table 3
Survey Response as Percent of Commuters by Mode and Total
Katy (I-10) and Northwest (US 290) Combined

Mode	Commuters in Survey Target Markets³	Surveys Distributed	Percent of Commuters Receiving a Survey	Surveys Returned	Surveys Returned as a Percent of Commuters
Commuters Main Lanes ^a	35,533	8,670	24%	2,121	6.0%
HOV Carpool/Vanpool ^b	13,443	6,791	51%	584	4.3%
Transit Riders ^c	5,342	700	13%	584	10.9%
Casual Carpoolers ^d	580	540	93%	216	37.2%
Total Non-User Survey	54,898	16,701	30%	3,505	6.4%
QuickRide User Survey	1,459	1,459	100%	511	35.0%
Total – QR Users & Non-User Surveys	56,357	18,160	32%	4,016	7.1%

Sources: Mainlane Volumes - Katy.xls, Mainlane Volumes – US 290.xls; TTI Houston HOV Lane Operations Summary, September 2003; METRO September 2001 Ridership Counts; TRB 04 - SP Survey.ppt; QR Non-User Survey Data Analysis.xls

^a Includes vehicles in main lanes, average for a.m. and p.m. peak periods with average vehicle occupancy 1.1

^b Includes HOV drivers and passengers, average for a.m. and p.m. peak periods

^c Surveys for transit were distributed on bus trips for all routes to represent a statistically valid sample.

^d Casual carpoolers in the a.m. peak period.

Almost one-fourth of all responses were submitted via the survey form on the web site. The highest percent by web was 32 percent of all main lanes survey responses, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Survey Response by Mail or Web Site
Katy (I-10) and Northwest (US 290) Combined

Mode	Responses Mailed/ Returned on Bus	Responses Web Site	Percent Responses Web Site
Main Lanes	1,441	680	32%
HOV Lane (not QR)	490	94	16%
Transit	546	38	7%
Casual Carpools	200	16	7%
Total	2,677	828	24%

Source: ASPShare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\Cleaned Data Base-B

Approximately 54 percent of all survey respondents provided a response for the optional question: “Please list any comments or suggestions you have regarding travel in [Katy or Northwest] corridor.” The number of written comments is high for both corridors and across all modes, as illustrated in Table 5.

³ Commuters in freeway main lanes and HOV lanes only. Frontage road travel not included.

Table 5
Written Comments by Mode and by Corridor

Mode	Katy Freeway (IH 10)	Northwest Fwy (US 290)	Total with Written Comments	% Surveys with Written Comments
Main Lanes	512	590	1,102	52%
HOV Lane (not QR)	141	202	343	59%
Transit	180	117	297	51%
Casual Carpools	88	58	146	68%
Total	921	967	1,888	54%

Source: ASPShare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\Copy of Copy of Cleaned Data Base-B_4.1.04

Many survey respondents made multiple comments. This analysis includes one to three comments per survey respondent (some respondents included as many as eight comments). A total of 2,676 comments were analyzed from the 1,888 survey respondents. The distribution is shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Number of Comments per Respondent by Mode

Mode	1 Comment	2 Comments	3 or More Comments	Total Comments Analyzed *
Main Lanes	761	256	85	1,528
HOV Lane (not QR)	205	98	40	521
Transit	218	63	16	392
Casual Carpools	78	47	21	235
Total	1,262	464	162	2,676

Source: ASPShare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\Analysis of Survey Comments from Data Base-B_4.1.04

* A maximum of 3 comments per respondent was analyzed.

METHODOLOGY

The responses to questions and written comments from each survey were entered into a database. The comments were recorded verbatim. The comments of each of 1,888 respondents who included remarks were reviewed to determine the range of comment topics. The various topics were grouped into categories. Each category was assigned a numerical code. A total of 30 categories of comments were identified.

A TTI staff member then read each respondent's comment and entered into the database one of the 30 codes for the comment. For survey respondents who wrote multiple comments, a code was assigned for one, two, or three comments. If there were more than three comments, the reviewer used her judgment to code the three most significant comments. At the end of the review, 2,676 comments had been coded. The use of a numerical code to categorize comments in the database makes it possible to analyze the comments by other survey response items.

The survey database was then sorted by mode (main lanes, HOV lane, transit, or casual carpool). In some cases, further analysis of comments created subtotals by mode by corridor (Katy IH-10 or Northwest 290). The comments in each mode were then grouped by comment category. A second TTI researcher reviewed each comment a second time by category by mode to ensure consistency. Any necessary changes were made to update the tallies.

The comments were reviewed to understand the points of view of commuters. In many cases, the responses were clearly split between those who favored a particular topic and those who were opposed. The findings in the next section are based upon the reviewer's judgment in an attempt to understand public opinion and to determine how the commuters may react to changes in the QuickRide program.

DATA SUMMARY

The following tables summarize the 2,676 comments from the 1,888 survey respondents who provided written notes. Because we are most interested in opinions about QuickRide and access for single occupant vehicles (SOV) on the HOV lane, summaries of comments on these topics are included also.

Table 7 provides a summary of written comments by category for all survey respondents. The number of comments and the percent of all comments are listed for each category. The categories are listed generally in order of the most comments. However, in cases where there are comments both in favor and opposed to a particular topic, the categories are reported together for convenient comparison. The category for "Favor SOV on HOV Lane" follows the category "Oppose SOV on HOV Lane." The table also includes the summary of comments in favor and opposed to QuickRide and SOV on the HOV lane.

Table 8 is the summary of the same information by mode to illustrate the numbers of comments and to compare the distribution by mode.

Table 7
Summary of Written Comments by Category
For All Survey Respondents⁴

Comment Categories for All Survey Respondents	Total No. of Comments	Percent of 2,676 Comments
METRO Comments	292	10.9%
Favor Rail for Corridor or In General	281	10.5%
Oppose Rail either METRO Rail or In General	14	0.5%
Oppose QuickRide/Charging Tolls for Access HOV/Freeway	225	8.4%
Oppose Charging Tolls to Access Highway	65	2.4%
Favor QuickRide	78	2.9%
General Comments, Not Specific	217	8.1%
Other Suggested Solutions	185	6.9%
Favor HOV General Comments	181	6.8%
Oppose HOV	52	1.9%
Solutions to Expand the Freeway, Add Lanes	169	6.3%
Oppose SOV on HOV	154	5.8%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	77	2.9%
Police and Enforcement Issues	118	4.4%
Need 2-Way HOV	77	2.9%
Restrictions on Truck Traffic	69	2.6%
Traffic is Horrible, Desperation but No Solution	65	2.4%
Reliability Issues on HOV	54	2.0%
Favor Diamond Lanes	46	1.7%
Oppose Diamond Lanes	11	0.4%
Extend QuickRide or HOV Hours	45	1.7%
Comments about the Survey Itself	33	1.2%
Support Casual Carpool as a Mode Choice	32	1.2%
Subtotal	2,540	95%
Other Comments	136	5%
TOTAL Comments All Survey Respondents	2,676	100%

Summary of Comments – All Survey Respondents	Total No. of Comments	Percent of 2,676 Comments
<i>QuickRide and SOV on HOV Lane</i>		
Favor QuickRide	78	2.9%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	77	2.9%
In Favor Comments	155	5.8%
Oppose QuickRide or Charging Toll for Access HOV	225	8.4%
Oppose Charging Tolls to Access Highway	65	2.4%
Oppose SOV on HOV	154	5.8%
Oppose Comments	444	16.6%

⁴ A total of 1,888 survey respondents included written comments.

Table 8
Summary of Comments by Category and Mode
All Survey Respondents

Survey Comments by Category and by Mode	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit	Casual Carpool	Total Comments
METRO Comments	85	20	126	61	292
Favor Rail for Corridor or In General	180	47	38	16	281
Oppose Rail	10	3	1	0	14
Oppose QuickRide/Tolls for HOV	126	61	21	17	225
Oppose Tolls to Access Highway	51	9	5	0	65
Favor QuickRide	51	18	6	3	78
General Comments, Not Specific	155	34	22	6	217
Other Suggested Solutions	143	23	11	8	185
Favor HOV General Comments	80	58	29	14	181
Oppose HOV	49	2	1	0	52
Solutions to Expand the Freeway, Add Lanes	138	19	6	6	169
Oppose SOV on HOV	40	65	26	23	154
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	62	8	4	3	77
Police and Enforcement Issues	46	51	11	10	118
Need 2-Way HOV	38	11	18	10	77
Restrictions on Truck Traffic	57	9	2	1	69
Traffic is Horrible, Desperation	45	7	6	7	65
Reliability Issues on HOV	15	14	18	7	54
Favor Diamond Lanes	32	7	6	1	46
Oppose Diamond Lanes	3	3	3	2	11
Extend QuickRide or HOV Hours	23	11	9	2	45
Comments about the Survey Itself	19	8	3	3	33
Support Casual Carpool as a Mode Choice	2	0	2	28	32
Subtotal	1,450	488	374	228	2,540
Other Comments	78	33	18	7	136
TOTAL Comments	1,528	521	392	235	2,676

Summary of Comments about QuickRide or SOV on HOV	Number of Comments by Mode				Total Comments
	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit	Casual Carpool	
Favor QuickRide	51	18	6	3	78
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	62	8	4	3	77
In Favor Comments	113	26	10	6	155
Oppose QuickRide or Toll for HOV	126	61	21	17	225
Oppose Charging Tolls for Highway	51	9	5	0	65
Oppose SOV on HOV	40	65	26	23	154
Oppose Comments	217	135	52	40	444

The survey included three questions asked of all mode groups⁵ that specifically address variable tolls for QuickRide and allowing SOV drivers to access QuickRide for a higher toll. Table 9 summarizes the responses to the three questions by mode.⁶ Table 10 summarizes the percent of comments by mode for categories on the similar topics.

Table 9
Survey Responses to Key Questions
About QuickRide and SOV Access to HOV Lane

Responses* to Survey Key Questions	Percent of Responses by Mode				Percent of All Answers
	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit	Casual Carpool	
To maintain a smooth traffic flow, the QuickRide toll could change with the time of day.					
What is your initial feeling regarding this option?					
Favor	44%	38%	43%	N/A	43%
Indifferent	22%	17%	24%	N/A	21%
Oppose	34%	46%	33%	N/A	36%
The QuickRide toll could also change with the amount of traffic in the HOV lane.					
What is your initial feeling regarding this option?					
Favor	30%	26%	31%	N/A	30%
Indifferent	19%	13%	19%	N/A	18%
Oppose	51%	60%	50%	N/A	52%
How do you feel about allowing people who drive alone to use the HOV lane for a higher toll than carpoolers?					
Favor	56%	38%	40%	15%	48%
Indifferent	11%	7%	9%	8%	10%
Oppose	33%	55%	52%	77%	43%

Source: *QR Non-User Survey Data Analysis.xls*

* Total 3,505 surveys returned

Table 10
Survey Written Comments
About QuickRide and SOV Access to HOV Lane

Comments* about QuickRide or SOV on HOV	Percent of Comments by Mode				Percent of All Comments
	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit	Casual Carpool	
Favor QuickRide	3.3%	3.5%	1.5%	1.3%	2.9%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	4.1%	1.5%	1.0%	1.3%	2.9%
In Favor Comments	7.4%	5.0%	2.5%	2.6%	5.8%
Oppose QuickRide or Toll for HOV	7.5%	11.7%	5.4%	7.2%	8.4%
Oppose Charging Tolls for Highway	3.3%	1.7%	1.3%	0.0%	2.4%
Oppose SOV on HOV	2.6%	12.5%	6.6%	9.8%	5.8%
Oppose Comments	13.4%	25.9%	13.3%	17.0%	16.8%

Source: *ASPSHare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\Analysis of Survey Comments from Data Base-B 4.1.04*

* Total 2,676 comments by 1,888 survey respondents.

⁵ Casual Carpoolers were not asked the two questions about QuickRide variable tolls.

⁶ The survey questions included the option of “Strongly Favor” and “Somewhat Favor” which are combined here, just as “Strongly Oppose” and “Somewhat Oppose” are combined.

FINDINGS⁷

The comments written on the survey forms and included in the electronic survey responses are appropriate for analysis because the voluntary expressions are an indication of the opinions and feelings of the respondent. In general, someone who completes a survey and takes the time to write in additional comments is either very thoughtful about the responses to key questions or feels very strongly about the survey topic, or both. In the case of this survey, the survey response rate was good and the number of written comments was notably high. More than half of all survey respondents in every survey category (main lanes, HOV lane, transit, and casual carpool) took the time to write additional comments.

Of the 1,888 survey respondents who added at least one written note on a topic, 25 percent wrote comments about two topics and 9 percent wrote comments about three or more topics. Whether about one or several topics, the comments were often lengthy and reflected thoughtful consideration of the survey topics. Several respondents offered to discuss their ideas further and included a personal mailing address, telephone number, or email address. A number of surveys were written with emphasis added by capitalization of words and exclamation marks. In a few surveys, the writers used expletives to indicate strong opinion or annoyance. Many respondents took the opportunity to report a good experience or constructive suggestion to improve travel on the freeway.

Examples of comments are provided for illustrative purposes and are not intended to reflect all points of view or to be the same representative number of examples for each category.⁸

Awareness of Regional Transportation Issues

The written comments to the survey evidence general awareness of the various regional debates about transportation problems and solutions. Many comments make specific reference to opinion on a recent issue or about the particular performance of a public agency. Topics often referenced include TxDOT plans to expand Katy Freeway (including plans to include tolled lanes), the METRO rail referendum, Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) congestion levels and toll rate increases, and flood control. Some comments also reference the public debates between local and national elected officials on the future of transportation in Harris County. At least in part, the survey comments about HOV lane operation or about the QuickRide program are influenced by the respondent's opinion about other local or regional transportation issues.

Uncertainty about Agency Responsibility

Agency responsibility for HOV lanes and the QuickRide program – and even about freeway management – is not clear to some of the survey respondents. In some cases, respondents comment on the operation of toll roads and not freeway HOV lanes. The purpose and use of the

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the source of data reported in the Findings is: *ASPSHare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\Analysis of Survey Comments from Data Base-B_4.1.04*

⁸ All comments can be reviewed by mode by category in the file: *ASPSHare\Houston Value Pricing\Reference Information\Filtered Comments by Mode and Corridor*

toll revenues for QuickRide are not understood. The types of comments that reflect confusion about which agency is in charge are as follows:

Examples of Comments on Agency Responsibility

- METRO NEEDS TO FIX THE KATY FREEWAY, TOO MANY CARS AND NOT ENOUGH LANES, YOU EXPANDED 59 SOUTHWEST FREEWAY AND YOU NEED TO EXPAND THE KATY FREEWAY.
- Put the toll booths where they belong. AT THE EXITS! Since the HCTRA wants us all to use EZ-Tags, and they've got booths at most of the exits anyway, clear the highway of these ridiculously placed roadblocks and collect the tolls when the cars exit.
- TxDOT should not focus so much on improving the HOV/QuickRide programs. TxDOT should begin taking a closer look at improving traffic flow on 290.
- The purpose of METRO is not to make money, it is to reduce traffic, METRO should make people in the regular freeway pay to drive alone.
- HOV lane is to promote multi-passenger commute, not to generate funds for METRO or Harris County.
- I would only support a toll and congestion-priced toll road on I-10 if net income went to public transit, not to Harris County Toll Road Authority.
- Don't appreciate the City taking advantage of making money while attempting to control traffic. And there was an agreement to remove toll booths once the Beltway was completed. That hasn't happened. The City needs to get their act together.

Comments Referencing METRO

A total of 292 survey respondents made comments referencing METRO. Comments were made about METRO plans or services by survey respondents of every mode. The most comments were made by transit riders, although commuters in the main lanes and casual carpoolers also contributed many comments. Table 11 provides the number of comments by mode and the percent of comments as distinguished by general tone for each mode and for the total of comments.

**Table 11
Comments Referencing METRO**

Comments Referencing METRO	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Comments by Mode	85	20	126	61	292
General Tone of Comments	Percent Main Lanes	Percent HOV Lane	Percent Transit Riders	Percent Casual Carpools	Percent of Total Comments
Positive Comments METRO Service	24%	5%	25%	20%	22%
Support for Improved Service – Specific	41%	50%	20%	5%	25%
I would use transit IF:	14%	15%	7%	10%	10%
Complaints METRO Service	21%	30%	48%	66%	42%

Overall, about 22 percent of all comments about METRO are complimentary or request increased service levels – about 65 comments as reported in Table 12.

Table 12
Positive Comments about METRO

Positive Comments or Request for Expansion of Existing Service	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Positive Comments about METRO, P&R, Riding the bus	9	0	24	7	40
Request to Increase P&R Capacity, Frequency	6	0	8	5	19
Extend P&R Hours	5	1	0	0	6
Total	20	1	32	12	65

Examples of positive comments are:

Examples of Compliments of METRO Service

- Thanks to Metro Park & Ride
- METRO does a super job with the Park & Ride--don't change it--the only way to go on the Katy Frwy.
- A+ Very Proficient, personal, and helpful
- My company subsidizes the Metro, so it costs me nothing, why would I change that?
- Service has been excellent on bus. Ridden for over 2 years on time for work everyday. Thanks.
- After commuting for 8yrs, I tried the bus--think it is the best way to get to and from work. I only drive if I have a doctors appointment.
- Having only lived in Houston and living very close to the Kingsland Park & Ride, riding the bus is ideal for my travel to the Medical Ctr. where I am employed. I just discovered a quicker way to get home, so I'm happier.
- I love the Metro bus ride. It is most convenient to me because I work downtown.
- Taking Metro some during the week has definitely helped my attitude.
- I love METRO Park and Ride!

Twenty-five percent of comments (73 comments) about METRO requested new or improved transit service to specific destinations. The highest numbers of requests are from commuters on the Northwest Freeway (US 290) encouraging METRO to complete construction of a park & ride facility west of Barker-Cypress, and commuters on Katy Freeway (IH-10) asking for park & ride from the City of Katy. Commuters specifically requested improved transit services for the Texas Medical Center, Uptown/ Post Oak/ Galleria, and Greenway Plaza.⁹ Three asked that the West Belt P&R stay in operation. Several comments requested park & ride service to various METRO transit centers where connections could be made to other routes. Table 13 summarizes the requests for new or improved transit service by specific destination and by mode.

⁹ Commuters had heard METRO intended to terminate direct service to TMC and require transfers to light rail downtown. Others had heard service to Uptown/Post Oak or from West Belt P&R was to be reduced.

Table 13
Requests for METRO Service

Requests for METRO Service	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpool	Total Comments
Need Additional P&R West of 1960	9	4	5	2	20
Keep P&R to TMC, Increase P&R Origins to TMC	8	2	7	1	18
Keep P&R to Uptown, Increase Routes and Improve Time to Uptown, without Transfer	6	1	6	0	13
Keep P&R to Greenway, Improve Travel Time to Greenway, without Transfer	3	1	6	0	10
Need P&R to Other Destinations/To Transit Centers for Other Bus Routes	7	1	1	0	9
Keep West Belt P&R Route to Downtown	2	1	0	0	3
Total	35	10	25	3	73

Ten percent of comments about METRO are suggestions to improve service or say the respondent would use transit if....

Suggestions to Improve Transit Service and Attract Transit Riders

- More buses during off-peak hours (shoulder periods) to the Kingsland park and ride lot would increase ridership and would take me out of the car.
- Better bus service between the inner loop and the Energy Corridor could cause me to take the bus.
- Would use Park & Ride if didn't have to switch buses downtown.
- I would use the Park & Ride and bus service, but if I have to own and maintain a car to drive from home to the park & ride I will drive to the office. Why don't you try bus/shuttle service from surrounding neighborhoods to 290 Park & Ride?
- Would love to take Metro but I need my car too often during the day. If we had a better taxi system to use during the day it would help.
- Please implement this: I think ALL Park and Ride Buses should give a "one minute warning" that they are about to leave by honking their horn 2 times; sort of like an "All Aboard". This give people who are waiting on a casual carpool a chance to get on the bus if it appears the bus will be faster.
- Advertise more the park and ride options available from both Kingsland and Addicks. Many people still unaware!
- Install a time estimating type of device on buses that would communicate w/park and ride location, displaying ETA of next arriving bus and estimated time of departure.
- Buses are ok until they get downtown and then continually go slow and stop. This is why I carpool instead. My suggestion: make Smith Street downtown an HOV only street during peak hours.

Almost half (42 percent) of comments about METRO are complaints – 124 total. The majority of critical comments are specifically about afternoon peak period bus service: buses not operating on time and over-crowded buses. Complaints about afternoon bus service on the park & ride routes represent 15 percent of all the comments about METRO and 36 percent of the complaints. Other complaints were about park & ride fares being too high for the quality of service, the condition of buses (either interior comfort or quality of maintenance), opposition to intermediate stops at the Northwest Transit Center, the performance of drivers, and specific comments about problems getting home one evening after floods interrupted transit service. The types of complaints are listed by mode in Table 14.

Table 14
Complaints about METRO Service

Complaints about METRO Service	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Poor Afternoon Park & Ride Service	1	0	28	16	45
General Complaints METRO Service	9	1	6	10	26
Bus Fare Too High for Service Quality	6	2	3	4	15
Complaints About Buses	1	1	7	5	14
Requests to Not Stop at NWTC	0	1	6	4	11
Complaints About Driver Performance	1	1	5	0	7
Service During Flood 11/17/2003	0	0	5	1	6
Total	18	6	60	40	124

Examples of comments critical of METRO service are focused on park & ride bus service in the afternoons.

Examples of Criticism of METRO Service in the Afternoon

- Not enough buses between 3:15 PM and 4:15 PM. Lines are too long! Add a few articulated buses during this time
- Provide more bus in the afternoon to avoid people standing on bus.
- METRO express buses traveling the HOV lanes during peak hours rarely are on schedule. Route 221 buses should pass at 5 minute intervals between 5p.m. & 6p.m. are often 15 minutes apart and they have standing room only.
- More 221 buses. During peak times (5:00 p.m. - 5:45 p.m.) 1/2 of 221 buses should start picking up riders at Louisiana & Rusk. During this time buses are always full by the time they reach the stop closest to my job (Louisiana & Texas) & it's not fair to have to wait 45 minutes for a 221 bus with an empty seat.
- The outbound bus on the 290 corridor needs to be more dependable. The pickup times are too dependent on inbound traffic problems. These buses sometimes are 5 - 10 min. late. There appears to be no contingency plan for buses making an inbound return trip. Too often the main lanes are backed up and cause the bus to be late picking up patrons in downtown.
- I use the bus only because of the cost of parking and the length of the drive. The service is awful on Route 214 in the evenings. You frequently wait for 15 - 30 minutes to get a bus unless you walk back to the first or second stop on the route.
- More return buses from 5:40 PM to 6:30 PM from downtown out to 290.
- The time between 216 buses in the afternoon is too long. The buses do not seem to ever meet the published schedule.
- At 5PM at Louisiana & Capitol the wait time for a bus is AT LEAST 10 min and up to 30 minutes b/c buses are already full by the time they get to the bus stop! Only a few people can fit on each bus.

Some of the general criticisms are informative about commuter attitudes. The length some of the comments are illustrative of the thoughtful responses to the survey – and also indicative of commuter frustration.

Examples of General Critical Comments Reflecting on Transit

- I would take the bus instead of driving every day from 290 @ West Rd if not for the inconvenience. Inconsiderate folks with cell phones talk louder than any radio and should be banned. The walk (from satellite parking lot) to the bus is too far (with Houston humidity and other miserable weather conditions, I am sweating by the time I get on the bus). The pm buses downtown are not usually on time - I usually get on the bus with 50-75 other people due to delays in buses. This may sound petty, but sweating in clean clothes while working downtown is enough to make me drive in traffic everyday and I doubt I'm the only one with this opinion.
- To whom it may concern: I've been riding the Kingsland Park and Ride bus 221 for 16 years from Mason Rd to downtown. In the past I found it to be the only way to go. For 3.50, I had the quickest ride available and I could use the time to finish my work, read or even sleep. In the last two to three months I have started casual carpooling for the following reasons: Smith Street is always congested because there are so many buses jockeying for a position to let riders off at all the stops. This adds 15-20 minutes to get from one end of downtown to the other and this eats up time saved by riding the bus on the HOV in the first place. Everyone is very unhappy about this and it's hard to believe that Metro can not use some of the other main streets through downtown to help alleviate this problem. With casual carpooling, the driver takes an alternate, less congested street and avoids the congestion on Smith Street making the commute much quicker. It is also free for a quicker ride. (Actually, I would prefer to ride the bus than ride in the car with a stranger and I do not mind to pay but I am not going to pay \$3.50 each way and it takes an additional 15-20 minutes to get there). The environment on the bus is much different than before. Riders can no longer relax and enjoy the commute time on the bus for reading and sleeping on the way because of the mobile phones ringing and the ongoing annoying phone conversations that sometimes last the entire commute. I know Metro has nothing to do with this but it does affect the overall choice of riding the bus. If Metro allows single occupant drivers on the HOV lane for money, you will lose in the end. Riders are already complaining about how congested the HOV lane is now, sometimes as congested as the normal traffic lanes and with the same frequency of accidents, and how much longer it is taking to get downtown. Single occupant cars will slow it down to where there is little benefit to riding in the lane -- those paying now to ride the bus will no longer see the same benefits. I know that if it gets any slower than it is now in addition to the Smith St congestion, I will stop riding the bus altogether because I'm not going to pay \$3.50 each way to save very little time to get to work and back.

Comments about Rail

Almost 300 survey respondents made comments about rail transit. Comments emphasizing the opportunity of rail specifically for one of the corridors or about rail in general were made by 281 survey respondents. Fourteen survey respondents made comments that were completely negative about METRO rail or rail in general. The numbers of comments by mode are shown in Table 15.

**Table 15
Comments about Rail**

Comments Referencing Rail	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Favor Rail	180	47	38	16	281
Oppose Rail	10	3	1	0	14

Examples of comments about rail, both in favor and opposed follow.

Example of Comments In Favor of Rail¹⁰

- The better choice is : rail and HOV lanes vs. on the freeway.
- I would love a rail system! Too bad they did away with the RR tracks to build more lanes!
- Metro Train should go to Katy many, many people would use it including myself.
- Rail is needed.
- Rail line should have been utilized and not removed existing tracks.
- Build a rail system!!
- Get some rail down the HOV lane....
- Bring METRO light rail to Katy!
- Rail! No options were given for alternative methods of transportation; we need rail on all major corridors; the sooner the better!
- COMMUTER RAIL is the best way of getting cars off the freeways and clearing congestion.
- Build a feasible rail system that will get me from Katy to my place of business and I will use it
- I am looking forward to the light rail in the loop, and would love to see that expanded along I-10, and out to IAH. Stops at key points along Katy Freeway like Park and Ride, Memorial City Mall, Westlake Park offices could surely make this profitable. Commuters like me would pay a premium for a reliable mass transit system that doesn't have to worry about stalled vehicles in the HOV lane.
- Elevated light rail - nothing can beat public transport!
- Leave part of right of way for commuter rail.
- Let's get some rail. More concrete is not the answer. It just perpetuates a failing mode of transportation. If we get rail, future development will be around rail not concrete
- Figure out how to include light rail into the plan. And complete it quickly.
- Light rail with plenty of parking facilities would be super!
- Forget the Katy Freeway expansion idea and get light rail!!!
- Put in rail on the most congested freeway in Houston instead of downtown to Medical Center.
- Build an efficient clean rail link any stop increasing the size of the freeway.
- Add rail. More lanes or tolls will not solve the congestion.
- Put rail/train in place of HOV.

Example of Comments Opposed to Rail

- Metro Rail is a waste of money that could be used to stop flooding.
- It is a shame that voters voted for rail that will do very little or nothing to help traffic congestion. Houston is laid out in such a way that rail will never help. A better solution would be to double deck the freeways to allow through traffic smoother transitions. If all the jobs were in downtown, rail and buses would help, but as we all know, that isn't the case. Better planning for the future is necessary. I hope that you all will do this.
- More lanes on the freeway, forget rail.
- This is just another way to get the money for light rail we are never going to use.
- Forget about rail of any kind. No one will use it. For example very few people will take a train ride and walk 10 - 15 minutes to their final destination in 90 degree weather and humidity in a suit.

¹⁰ Some comments supporting rail in the Katy or Northwest corridors may also have included a comment critical of the METRO rail project from downtown to Reliant Park (inside Loop 610 rather than serving suburban areas). In this discussion, that type of comment is reported as 'Favor Rail'.

Comments about Traffic in General

In general, the written comments reflect frustration about travel in Houston and specifically on these corridors. Sixty-five comments are expressions of desperation about traffic congestion but without a suggestion of how to improve the situation. The distribution of comments by mode is shown in Table 16.

Table 16
Comments about Traffic in General

Comments About Traffic	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Comments in General, Not Specific	155	34	22	6	217
Traffic Horrible, No Suggested Solution	51	9	5	0	65

The comments are from Katy and Northwest freeways and all modes, although the majority of comments are from the main lanes. Examples of these types of comments:

Examples of Comments About Traffic in General

- The traffic is horrible.
- Traffic is congested all hours of the day, both directions!
- Do anything! Just do something!
- I-10 should be renamed 'I-don't work anymore', it's currently a horrible commute.
- We are moving away from Houston because of our commutes to work - It's unbearable. My time is too valuable to spend 2-3 hours a day on the freeway. Please fix this problem.
- Fix the horrible traffic!!!
- It is a horrible commute during peak hours. I traveled from I-10 and Eldridge to I-10 and Shepherd for 3 years until I couldn't bear it any longer!!!
- Something needs to be done about US 290 congestion. They're working on I-10, so what's the delay on US 290? More and more new houses are being sold out US 290 everyday.
- Hwy 290 and Beltway 8 are without a doubt the worst, most congested roads in Houston. They make life in Houston miserable!
- Traveling US 290 is a headache during the work week.
- Other than I-10 it [US 290] is the worst in Houston and my last choice for travel.
- The congestion is horrendous. Do something about it. Now.
- [US 290] has become a night mare at all times. With new subdivisions popping up everyday, it is only going to get worse. We plan to move because of the horrible congestion.
- Desperately needs improvement. If I could not use the HOV, I would move to another part of town.
- I moved out here because I couldn't afford to live closer into town...The stress caused by sitting in traffic 2 to 3 hours everyday added to the fear of losing my job due to tardiness over which I have no control, is enough to make someone suicidal!!! I have had it to the point that selling my house and car, and going to live in a box under the bridge is becoming rather appealing. For the love of God PLEASE help us!!!
- It is getting very bad and congested. I am very concerned that it is not getting the attention required and that when it does it will be too late. There are multiple housing developments currently being built and many more people are moving in that direction which will continue to choke the highway. IT NEEDS A LOT OF ATTENTION NOW!!!

Expanding the Freeway Lanes to Relieve Congestion

As shown in Table 17, a total of 169 survey respondents, 138 of whom use the main lanes, suggested the answer to congestion is to expand the freeway, add additional lanes. Nineteen respondents who use the HOV lanes, six transit riders and six casual carpoolers also suggested freeway expansion. Several of the comments specifically mentioned expediting freeway construction for the Katy (I-10) expansion project.

As included in Table 17, 16 survey respondents commented against adding freeway lanes or against the specific TxDOT design for the Katy Freeway expansion now under construction. The alternatives suggested include depressing the freeway to reduce noise pollution, improving landscaping, and increasing options for mass transit.

Table 17
Opinions about Expanding the Freeway to Relieve Congestion

Expand Freeways to Relieve Congestion	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Favor Expanding the Freeway	138	19	6	6	169
Oppose Adding Freeway Lanes (IH-10)	11	3	2	0	16

The examples of comments about freeway expansion (adding lanes) to address traffic congestion are listed below. Examples include in favor and opposed to comments.

Examples of Comments In Favor of Freeway Expansion

- I would be willing to pay additional fees to speed up the current 6 year construction plan - maybe in the meantime implement better traffic management plans; and educate people that if they keep changing lanes it slows down the traffic.
- Just make it wider. Build it for 5 years into the future. i.e. wide enough to handle traffic in 2020 if finished in 2015.
- The only option is to expand the number of lanes, but construction would just add to the problem! It's a Catch-22.
- Bigger Freeway-more lanes!! Now!!
- We need 15-20 lanes out there now, not 6-8 years from now! What a mess!
- Glad it's finally being widened!
- The Katy Freeway needs to be expanded to include additional lanes if the land is available.
- Now - Today the Katy is the worst freeway. Enlarge! Expand! I've lived in Houston since 1976 and drove the Katy since. It needs so much work. Please hurry!
- Widen the highway. Double deck it and no tolls!
- Need to add more lanes each way.
- HWY 290 NEEDS TO BE EXPANDED ASAP. IT IS TURNING INTO HWY I 10

Examples of Comments Opposed to Freeway Expansion

- I feel that the currently TxDOT plans for the Katy Freeway are inadequate and still need work. My biggest concerns include the landscape, pollution, flooding, and options for other mass transit ideas.
- Our family is strongly against any MAJOR construction occurring on I-10 (Katy Freeway).

Suggestions of Other Ways to Improve Traffic

Many survey respondents have other ideas to resolve congestion and improve traffic flow, as shown by mode in Table 18.

Table 18
Suggestions to Improve Traffic

Other Suggested Solutions	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Suggestions to Improve Traffic	143	23	11	8	185

Examples of the ideas to improve traffic area listed below.

Examples of Ideas to Improve Traffic

- On access roads: Synchronize the stops lights; during rush hours have times of the lights lengthened (green) to move traffic along the access roads faster; before intersections, add more roads and onto the north-south streets.
- Consider double decking the freeway and make leftmost freeway lane 'No trucks allowed'.
- Elevated road along Hempstead with toll road from 610 to Fairfield, very limited access [Fairfield, 1960, Beltway 8]
- Hempstead-One way in town. 290 - One way out of town.
- Consider relocation of on and off ramps.
- Merging is the problem. Not more concrete. Less merging. Need dedicated through lanes over longer distances. Merging stops the whole freeway. Stop the merging.
- Commuting in general in Houston would be better if bicycle use were to be encouraged and included in a much bigger way in overall transportation planning. The Netherlands and many other European nations are quite successful with using bicycles for basic transportation and health.
- Express lane from Grand Parkway to downtown or Baytown with no exits
- Too many to list. If you want comments. I can be reach at [email provided].
- Extend the HOV lane to Barker Cypress. The most congested part of my commute is getting into the HOV lane.
- 1. Extend the entrance lane from Huffmeister to the exit @ SH 6 going eastbound since there is not feeder 2. Expand the HOV entrance/Exit to the Galleria area. 3. Lengthen the distance for the entrance ramps for the HOV's. 4. Add right turn lanes to the roads around the Park and Ride centers 5. Add exits from the HOV to the main lanes or feeders roads.
- Stop all the construction out here since roads can't handle it.
- I would like to see a toll road along old US 290 (aka Hempstead Highway) that ran all the way out past FM 1960. Ideally this toll road would not have any exits until FM 1960 unless for emergency purposes. This would free up main lanes to flow freely and serve as a shuttle route to get many people out of downtown to the suburbs more effectively.

Opinions about HOV Lanes

Generally positive comments about HOV lanes and carpools/vanpools were made by 181 survey respondents, some from each mode as illustrated in Table 19. Most of the 52 comments that are not in favor of HOV lanes are made by commuters in the main lanes.

Table 19
Opinions about HOV Lanes

Opinions about HOV Lanes	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Favor HOV Lanes	80	58	29	14	181
Oppose HOV Lanes	49	2	1	0	52

Examples of comments in favor of or opposed to HOV lanes are included in the following.

Examples of Comments In Favor of HOV Lanes

- HOV options need to be made available for Katy residents commuting into town for work--we will have no other options once the freeway construction is under way.
- Keep HOV this way.
- I would provide 4 lanes of traffic going in each direction and 1 HOV lane in each direction for a total of 10 lanes. I would also allow vehicles with two people to travel the HOV lane at all times. Any alternate fuel vehicle would also be allowed on the HOV lane even with only one passenger. More people would likely buy more fuel efficient vehicles and help reduce the amount of air pollution.
- Recommend vanpools to and from work.
- Post the HOV schedule more clearly and enough period of time before one must enter it.
- More access to the HOV lane from the Beltway and between the Beltway and the Loop. We have wanted to use the HOV to get out of Houston around the Beltway.
- I would not have picked to live in Katy without access to a carpool and the HOV lane. I travel 43 miles each way to/from work and want to make sure that the HOV lanes are protected and enhanced in any expansion.
- High occupancy should be used for what it was started as; cars with a larger number of occupants to encourage more car pooling and less cars
- Living out of town, we seldom travel to Houston more than once a month, but the HOV lane is wonderful when we can use it.
- Do not take away the HOV lane, even during construction.
- HOV is brilliant but already busy at peak hours. Too many violators.
- It's absolutely dreadful without the HOV lane. Commuting during rush hour on the main lanes is a nightmare.
- I use the HOV lanes as is. I would never pay any extra to use them. I already pay tolls on the Beltway. I would use the HOV lanes more if they were open more, i.e.-between 11 and 2. I think the higher occupancy for peak time is 100% acceptable.
- I would like that more lanes can be made. I take the HOV sometimes, it would be nice to have an exit by the Beltway also instead of going all the way to 610.
- More HOV lanes. Same toll system as toll ways. Same account, same transponder.
- I think it's great and not many people take advantage of it. Main lanes are always congested.

Examples of Comments Opposed to HOV Lanes

- The HOV lane is probably the most ineffective system for mass transit I have ever witnessed. I have lived in the New York area and in London, England, both of which have populations about four times that of Houston, but with much more efficient mass transportation systems. I realize that installing the infrastructure used in those cities would be all but impossible in Houston, but the HOV lane is not an acceptable alternative. It does not significantly improve traffic congestion on the main lanes because carpooling is not a convenient option for most people in Houston. Further, the design of the HOV lane actually increases traffic congestion on the I-10 corridor because the main lanes are narrower than they should be and no shoulder exists next to the inside lanes. I can't believe METRO continues to waste time and resources analyzing options for improving this system when the only sensible solution is to scrap it and start over from scratch. It will simply never accomplish the goal it is intended to accomplish!
- It is awful!!! There is a bad bottleneck every morning westbound between Wirt and Blalock. There is NO REASON why my morning commute should be 30 minutes to travel 10 miles. HOV Lanes are a total waste, since I am traveling in the opposite direction. A better option is California's diamond lanes, which do not waste valuable lanes, and are usable either direction.
- The HOV lane has never benefited anyone I know. The two center lanes of the new freeway should be a toll way. It took over 45 minutes to go 12 miles on my trip yesterday. THIS FREEWAY NEEDS 10 more lanes on each side
- Lose the HOV lane and make it a ' for trucks only' lane.
- Get rid of the HOV lane. Forget about \$ fees to travel I-10, make diamond lanes with access every 1/4 mile.

Opinions about QuickRide or Charging Tolls for Access to HOV/Freeway

Comments about QuickRide were both positive and negative by survey respondents from all modes. Seventy-eight comments in favor of QuickRide as a concept are reported here. See also comments in favor of SOV on HOV in the next section – many survey respondents indicate their support for QuickRide is specifically support for allowing SOV access to the HOV.

Comments indicating opposition referenced either QuickRide in concept or specifically the idea of charging for access to the HOV lane for vehicles with fewer than 3 persons. A total of 225 comments were made opposed to QuickRide or charging tolls for carpools of fewer than 3 persons. Although the description of QuickRide refers to the HOV lane, 65 survey respondents also included comments opposed to a program that charges tolls for access to an Interstate Highway or to a highway constructed with tax dollars. The survey responses are summarized in Table 20.

Table 20
Opinions about QuickRide or Tolls for Access to HOV/Freeway

Comments About QuickRide or Tolls for Access to HOV/Freeway	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Support for QuickRide	51	18	6	3	78
Oppose QuickRide or Oppose Tolls to Access HOV	126	61	21	17	225
Oppose Tolls on Interstate Freeway	51	9	5	0	65

Comments in favor of QuickRide are listed first below, followed by comments opposed to QuickRide or tolls. In many cases, the comment includes a condition of support (for example, the amount of the toll or the use of the toll revenue).

Examples of Comments In Favor of QuickRide

- If or when implementing the QuickRide program please consider different tolls for those that only use the segment between 610 and Frontage road exit (westbound) and the similar inbound segment between Gessner and 610. Good survey. I really like the differential pricing ideas to more evenly distribute traffic during high congestion periods.
- I would only support a toll and congestion-priced toll road on I-10 if net income went to public transit, not to Harris County Toll Road Authority.
- Please do whatever is needed to keep HOV moving-especially with the planned construction. Increase required number of riders or \$ for QuickRide.
- I like the QuickRide concept. I just think \$2.00 per trip is a little extreme. If the morning time would move to 7 and the QuickRide Program cost only \$1.00 per trip, I would sign-up today!! I know one buck may sound petty, but when you add up 2 dollars per trip over a month's time, plus the \$2.50 administrative fee, the total come to over \$80 per month.
- Katy Freeway is not working well. We need to invest money in it. Should widen it and come up with other solutions such as 'QuickRide' program.
- Currently the HOV is free and charging a fee should result in an improvement in the freeway or access to the HOV-you need to spell out clearly where money is going-don't waste it.
- I start my trip before the HOV lane and get off at the Beltway. I have an EZ tag for the tolls. I assume that any pay-for-use scheme would let you use the same EZ tag. If not, it should. I wouldn't want to have to get another tag, or stop and pay cash.
- I think the extra toll of \$2.00 on the HOV is worth it to me if I were running late for an important event or emergency during rush hour traffic if it could be reduced to 15 minutes.
- If I pay to ride, how does it know if I have 3 and not charge the account?
- I would be willing to pay to ride the HOV depending on the traffic and the cost to ride if it was easier to access the HOV. I probably would not use it until it becomes easier to access. Most of my co-workers, including some that do use it, share this feeling. I believe the ones that do ride it, would quit if they were charged a toll.
- All cars on the HOV should pay toll. No matter how many passengers.
- I think the 'pay for speed lanes' (similar to those coming on I-10) is the best idea for 290.
- Set fares that are consistent and do not flex depending on flow. Your customers will appreciate knowing the rate.
- Have HOV lane go all the way through to Downtown. Fare for 2 riders during peak hours is a great idea, but if you charge too much, no one will take that option. Review the I-10 case for data on what works.
- Need better explanation of QuickRide program when you have the correct number of people (3 during peak).
- Traffic during peak hours is torture! QuickRide is awesome!
- I like the QuickRide option. Charging a toll is a fair price to pay for convenience.

Examples of Comments Opposed to QuickRide or Opposed to Tolls to Access HOV

- I don't believe anyone should be able to pay to use the HOV lanes. The 290 HOV lane is ALWAYS backed up during rush hour in the afternoon. You should require 3 or more riders in all cars. I didn't select any of the options you showed in Part III because if I need to use the HOV lane on days when

I don't take the bus (i.e. I had a doctor's appointment, etc.) then I get two or more people to ride with me. I wish you would totally delete the QuickRide Program.

- Your options of charging higher fees during peak hours are exactly backwards. You should charge lower fees during peak hours to encourage usage. If you want more Metro/HOV users you should lower prices, not raise them.
- Charging people on HOV and requiring 3+ on HOV only causes MORE traffic on the regular lanes. Why do this to commuters? 2 people is hard enough to find to commute with. Causing MORE Traffic on the regular lanes is not resolving traffic by making less people able to ride the HOV.
- The QuickRide program is a terrible idea. It makes me angry, and I have talked with many carpoolers who feel the same way. The purpose of the HOV is to reduce the number of cars on the road and to reduce pollution. The purpose is not to help people with more money get to work faster. The HOV is already very congested.
- If the toll roads only charge \$1.00 why would someone pay twice that amount to get to use 290?
- You should allow 2 persons per vehicle in the mornings rather than restricting to 3+ from 6:45-8a.m. 290 needs to be widened and a commuter train added into the town.
- Allowing people to drive in the HOV lane- even if they pay a traffic toll- is a very bad idea. It is too easy to pick up riders. I would rather see more restrictions in terms of more riders than imposing a fee for fewer riders.
- Since the change to requiring 3 in the HOV during each peak times, less people seem to use the HOV and the highway traffic is worse. It is too difficult to find 3 people to carpool with.
- You would not need the 'QuickRide' Program if single occupant drivers were not allowed to drive in HOV lanes currently. I do not know who all these drivers are but they sometimes outnumber the drivers with 3 occupants. If these drivers were excluded, you could probably change the HOV on 290 back to 2 occupants during peaks hours.
- It seems that turning the HOV into a toll way would risk federal funding that is provided to encourage carpooling. Charging for use would probably reduce volume on the HOV and drivers. The difference to the main lanes would improve the overall situation.
- I think the QuickRide fund allocation needs to be clear. If you are using funds to improve 290, great. If it goes to somewhere else, why should people pay if you are going to spend money on some other program?
- Though I can afford a QuickRide program, I oppose it as another program that benefits the wealthy. A \$10m/yr citizen pays the same metro tax as a \$100m citizen and then misses out on opportunity.
- I do not support QuickRide. HOV lane is to promote multi-passenger commute, not to generate funds for METRO or Harris County. Need light rail to suburbs.
- Why do we have to pay? Paying a toll fee does not resolve the problem, it increases bureaucracy.
- I am not willing to pay a toll to travel on the HOV lane, I already pay for a toll tag to travel on Sam Houston toll way.
- IN ORDER TO MAKE DRIVING EXPERIENCE BETTER YOU MUST TRY TO MAKE INCENTIVES FOR COMMUTING FROM AND TO DOWN TOWN. DON'T MAKE US PAY MORE TO HAVE THE LUXURY OF DRIVING IN THE HOV LANE
- I DO NOT PAY ON HOV 'NO MORE TAXES'
- I pay too much property taxes and will not pay more just to use the full HOV Lane
- I think it is unfair to offer a convenience just to the RICH! Not having a lot of money puts one at a major disadvantage!! Their job (and getting there on time) is just as important as those who can PAY to get there on time.
- I do not feel like it should cost us more money to get to work in a timely manner. The quicker we are off the roads, the less pollution in the air.

Examples of Comments Opposed to Tolls on an Interstate Highway/Freeway

- I am against paying for road construction and then paying tolls on top of that.
- Motorists should not have to pay a fee to travel on state highways.
- Lexus lanes on interstate highways are wrong and not an appropriate use of federal interstate dollars. The money should be spent on rail or something far more effective than bilking \$80/month to avoid a mess that hasn't been dealt with from the get go.
- It is a nightmare, but anyhow I'm against toll fees. I feel that Texas is going to end up like Florida in which you can't travel unless you have change in your pocket.
- There is enough room, and enough advanced construction technology for a system to be built that does not need toll roads that my tax \$'s are paying for anyway. I am opposed to more tolls.
- I am taxed already for the Metro function. A toll is another form of taxation. More taxes are unacceptable in any form. Metro wastes enough already.
- I do not believe I should have to pay money to drive on I-10
- I am not happy about toll rates increasing, also the monthly EZ tag rates increasing too. And I refuse to pay for driving on a freeway I all ready pay taxes for.
- Toll ways and charges down public highways are not the way to fix traffic congestion. Better public transportation and ease of use is a better plan to fix it. Toll ways are just another money grabbing way for the City and Metro to make a dime off of Houston and surrounding driving citizens.
- We pay enough in taxes. I don't care for the idea of paying more money to travel on the roads that my tax dollars should be providing already. In addition, build a rail line or share the one that runs next to 290 and put some commuter trains.
- To charge for road use is fraud and stealing. Politics! I would find another route if charged
- Don't try to charge for driving the freeway - we are already taxed and charged to the limit for everything.
- With all the construction going on before or after you get to 290 is ridiculous. You can never get from one place to another without seeing some sort of construction. When will it all end?! Now you want to charge more money for access roads, etc? What are our taxes for? Give us a break please!
- We pay enough in local taxes - we should have the best road system in America - we don't. We should not have to pay extra tolls - TxDOT is not accountable to anyone - no one checks them - they make many costly mistakes because of poor planning that cause many projects to be redone and down - they need to be accountable to someone.

Opinions about SOV Access to the HOV Lane

Comments by survey respondents reflected strong opinion about the idea of allowing SOV access to the HOV – strong opinions either for or against. The majority of opinions in favor of SOV access to HOV were from the main lanes; however, comments opposed to SOV were from all modes. The distribution of comments in favor or opposed by mode are shown in Table 21.

Table 21
Opinions about SOV Access to the HOV Lane

Comments About Allowing SOV Access to HOV	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Favor SOV Access to HOV	62	8	4	3	77
Oppose SOV on HOV	40	65	26	23	154

The examples of comments about SOV access to HOV are listed below, first comments in favor and then comments opposed to SOV in the HOV lane.

Examples of Comments In Favor of SOV Access to the HOV Lane

- Sometimes but not all the time I would gladly pay a toll to use the HOV. It depends on the congestion and if I need to be somewhere in a hurry.
- To reduce air pollution, low emission vehicles (even with driver only) should be allowed to use the HOV lanes at all hours.
- I can not easily carpool. I like the idea of a single driver paying more for HOV, but will one lane be enough? Also if charge varies by level of congestion: a] How will you measure congestion and b] How will you communicate the charges to travelers?
- People are not going away. We must provide much better public transportation to solve this problem. Allowing single people to drive HOV would be used occasionally by everyone, and make sense.
- Paying to use the HOV while driving alone is a good idea; but don't change over \$1.50 each direction. I'd rather wait in traffic than pay more than that.
- Make HOV Lane available for single occupant vehicles for added fee. \$4.00 is fair.
- Suggest \$1.00 toll for single passengers on HOV.
- Would like to use HOV alone, but not with a toll over \$2
- Giving single drivers the option to pay to take the HOV is a great idea!! I know most mornings it takes me 20+ minutes just to get to the entrance for the HOV at 1960, and unfortunately all I have to look forward to is the additional 40 minutes riding on 290 to my exit. The HOV would be money well spent in my opinion.
- Vehicles with single occupant should be able to travel on HOV lane by paying reasonable toll (\$.50 to \$.75). Higher volume with less toll will generate sufficient income to make HOV lanes profitable. Higher toll amount will deter all passengers from using lanes, leading to revenue loss. Toll should be fixed value and not vary with time and traffic. It is difficult to manage that way.
- I WOULD PAY TO DRIVE ALONE ON HOV LANES
- I would definitely use the HOV lane if it were reasonably priced (i.e. \$1.00-\$2.00). I am a lone drive.
- This study is a waste of time. HOV should be open 24 hours, 7 days a week and should be available to any driver (only 1 in car) during off peak hours for free! The HOV are simply not utilized properly.

Examples of Comments Opposed to SOV Access to the HOV Lane

- I strongly dislike the idea of allowing those who can afford it to drive their cars (or SUVs) alone on the HOV lanes (Please research the definition of HOV). This will cause excessive congestion on the lane as it is now, and when the freeway expansion is complete in 25 years, creates an unfair use of the additional HOV/Toll lanes (lanes that could have easily been constructed with an integrated Rail Line), and creates a divided society where 'poor' people would have to sit in traffic.
- Allowing people to pay any amount to ride on the HOV (single) would totally defeat the purpose of having one. It will become just another congested lane like the freeway only earning money for Metro. People (with money) will pay anything to be able to travel on the HOV. However; the majority of us (who don't earn the big bucks) would end up riding the HOV, which will now become congested because of the QuickRide program. THIS IS A TERRIBLE PROPOSAL!!!!
- SOVs on the HOV negate the purpose of the HOV lane, which should benefit carpoolers, not rich, impatient drivers.
- Singles should never be on the HOV-No matter how much they spend. It is to award those who are willing to find someone to ride with them.

Examples of Comments Opposed to SOV Access to the HOV Lane

- There are many single person vehicles using the HOV lanes at present, as witnessed on my commutes along the Katy Freeway. What will stop the abusers from using the new lanes, just as they currently do?
- Do not agree with 'Lexus' lanes. Allowing people with money to not have wait in traffic, even if they are alone.
- HOV should only be for buses and carpools.
- What was the goal of the High Occupancy Vehicle Lane initiative? In large metropolitan areas across the country, the HOV lane system was instituted to reduce traffic on the main highway lanes by giving people an incentive to carpool. This incentive brought reductions in the city's main lane traffic by taking at least 1 vehicle off the roadway for each passenger in the HOV lane. The ideas suggested by this survey communicate that Metro merely wants to generate revenue by allowing single occupant vehicles to use the HOV lane and not promote HOV efficiency. What does this truly accomplish? Metro generates income, but does it really help our traffic congestion issues? No, it does not.
- HOV stands for high occupancy vehicles right?! If you start letting people on who drive alone, what is the use. I am opposed to any plan that allows for single passenger cars on the HOV lane. I understand you want to generate revenue, but not at the expense of high occupancy vehicles. The HOV lane is already backed up at times.
- The HOV should not be open to drive-only cars otherwise it is not an HOV Lane!
- HOV = High Occupancy Vehicle. This concept (allowing individuals to take the HOV) is a bad idea. It will ruin the HOV for carpoolers.
- The HOV lane should not be for individual drivers. The goal is to get vehicles off 290. Do not make it easier for individual drivers.
- Do not prefer this option at all! It defeats the purpose of the HOV lane. This would be the same as giving a HOV freeway lane to the rich.
- The HOV lane is for high occupancy vehicles and should not be 'sold out' for 1, 2, or 3 dollars a car.
- The HOV lane should be governed by the # of people in the vehicle-not the size of the wallet/ability to pay a toll otherwise, why call it something it is truly not?
- I would oppose allowing single passenger vehicles on the HOV. If you did that, it would no longer be an HOV. Duh!
- I worry about opening the HOV to single drivers in peak hours. It is already pretty congested at those times with the current rules (at least, it appears that way for me). Also, it will be much more difficult for METRO police to monitor this because now they will need to check every single occupant vehicle (which slows traffic at those points) instead of quickly being able to flag them to the side of the road.
- Do not allow only 1 person to ride HOV - regardless of toll charge.
- I am irate about QuickRide. It will become so congested that no one will benefit from HOV lane except Metro. Where was the vote on this decision? You are also promoting smog for a price, totally against what should be happening. Where is the rail?
- You are going to sit on the road and change the toll after counting cars? How can you tell how congested the HOV is? That doesn't even sound feasible. Not a good idea-make it too congested-What are you thinking? I know \$\$\$-never mind how crowded it gets.
- HOV=High Occupancy -what don't you understand? I get angry at people who cheat, driving alone-seen frequently! The shorter commute time is a reward for car pooling and cutting back on emissions not for solo jerks who seem to think their time is more valuable than mine. What makes you think that allowing paying solo drivers access will pressure the shorter commute time? If you allow freer access to the HOV lane it will look just like the rest of 290-a parking lot!

Concern about Enforcement HOV

A significant number of survey respondents, most from the main lanes and HOV lane, added comments about enforcement of the HOV lane restrictions or about the vehicle (user) categories that are currently eligible for HOV access. The numbers of comments are provided in Table 22.

Table 22
Comments about Enforcement of HOV Lanes

Comments About HOV Enforcement and Vehicle Eligibility for HOV	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Comments Referencing HOV Enforcement	46	51	11	10	118
Criticism of Vehicles Eligible for HOV	9	13	3	2	27
Total	55	64	14	12	145

Examples of comments referencing HOV enforcement are listed first, followed by examples of comments on vehicle eligibility.

Examples of Comments About HOV Enforcement

- Higher fines for those who choose to currently travel the HOV lanes alone.
- There needs to be more police monitoring HOV vehicles during rain storms because cars with one passenger get on because they know that no police will be there to stop them.
- Strongly support continued inclusion of motorcycle riders in HOV lanes (and possible public education that motorcycles ARE allowed). Also strongly support current enforcement efforts. Suggest that enforcement efforts in the area West of Route 6 (the HOV lanes that are not physically separated from the main lanes with barricades) be increased - violators are common and merging traffic inbound in the morning where the segregated HOV section starts causes backups and all the fun road rage that goes with it.
- There are always single people in the HOV lane. The Metro police should be out there more often.
- There is too much HOV abuse in non barricaded areas!
- A joke! Why don't you ticket the one person vehicles using the HOV? All the time!!!
- Metro Police should not be at exits (especially Gessner exit) of HOV lane which causes HOV lane congestion and delays. They should be stationed at entrances only.
- Monitor the HOV at the entrance of the HOV. Metro monitoring the HOV at the end of the HOV. Metro police issue tickets when they have no idea what time a rider in the HOV lane got on.
- More rigid consequences for violators of the two way HOV lanes that have no concrete barrier [diamond lanes]. These people constantly and dangerously change over into the HOV lane over the solid white lines, simply to pass other vehicles.
- A lot of vehicles have been violating the HOV lanes. There should be more police to enforce the law. I have reported lots of vehicles violating HOV lane as part of your 921-HERO program. If the law is enforced better, there would be less congestion during peak time.
- Do not allow single occupancy vehicles to use the HOV lane at any price. Better monitoring needed. There seem to be a lot of single- and double-occupancy (without QuickRide pass) that use the HOV lane. For instance, on 290, they will exit at Mangum if they do not see a Metro officer. If they see an officer at Mangum, they exit at the transit center. It doesn't seem that officers are often stationed at both places.

Examples of Comments Vehicles Eligible for the HOV Lane

- Stop off duty policemen from riding alone on HOV lanes.
- Do not allow cars to take the HOV that have an infant or non driver as a passenger. This is not eliminating another vehicle on the road. That infant or non driver could not drive if the driver became ill. If this is allowed; then my dog would qualify as a passenger. Also motorcycles should not be allowed on HOV. The majority of them are not very courteous & they tend to sit on the bumper of the car in front of them. How is a motorcycle taking another vehicle off the road? I thought the main purpose of the HOV was to eliminate additional cars on the freeway with multi-passengers.
- Children should not count as passengers under current HOV plan; in any event, children (as passenger) should require payment of toll. Children as passengers do not reduce congestion on main lanes.
- Get the cars with a driver and then a child in a child seat off the HOV Lanes. How is this helping congestion? The child can't drive a car so this doesn't take a car off the road. It's also dangerous. There are child care places much closer to these people's homes, but they drag the kids downtown so they can take the HOV. You shouldn't be able to use a special purpose road like this unless it actually helps traffic congestion.
- If off duty cops and city employees can drive the HOV, then so can I. Traffic builds up every morning between Hwy 6 and Fry because all these [*] riding the diamond lane then cutting back into the main lanes.
- Do not allow a parent with child under 16 years of age on HOV. Do not allow every friend of Metro and every law enforcement agency to drive on HOV with no passenger.
- HOV occupancy should be limited to licensed drivers.

Other Comments

Multiple respondents to the survey included comments on additional topics. The numbers of comments by topic are listed in Table 23.

**Table 23
Other Topics of Comments by Survey Respondents**

Other Topics Mentioned Often by Survey Respondents	Main Lanes	HOV Lane	Transit Riders	Casual Carpools	Total Comments
Request for 2-Way HOV	38	11	18	10	77
Restrict Truck Traffic on Freeways	57	9	2	1	69
Concern about Reliability on HOV Lane	15	14	18	7	54
Support for More Diamond Lanes	32	7	6	1	46
Extend Hours for HOV or QR	23	11	9	2	45
Support for Casual Carpools	2	0	2	28	32
Comments for TxDOT	27	2	2	0	31

Sample comments are provided to provide a sense of the survey respondents' opinions.

Request for 2-Way HOV

- HOV lane should remain open at all times including weekends and should also be available both directions.
- Change the HOV lanes to diamond-marked lanes going both ways instead of barricaded one-way as it now exists. This works in other large cities.

Restrict Truck Traffic on Freeways

- Keep the trucks off during heavy traffic times.
- I think semi trucks & other large vehicles should be required to travel in only the right lane and it should be strongly enforced.

Concern about Reliability on HOV

- Problem: Getting behind a vehicle (including bus) that moves as slow or slower than main lane traffic - no vehicles in front of said vehicle & many backed up behind said vehicle.
- The HOV needs to have some way to prevent the traffic being stalled when there is an accident or someone with car problems. It would also be good if there were more places to get on or off the HOV lane.

Support for More Diamond Lanes

- HOV lane should not have barriers that make us use very difficult. Make them all like I-10 between Hwy 6 and Katy and use and traffic will improve.
- You should paint in a diamond lane for HOV from Barker Cypress to West road to Relieve congestion on 290.

There were 11 survey respondents who commented specifically against diamond lanes.

- Keep the barriers on the HOV lane. The diamond lanes are unsafe as people come in and out.

Extend Hours for HOV or QuickRide

- HOV is too congested between 5 & 6 pm - the 2+ should be 4:45-6:30.
- HOV lanes should be open longer (e.g. Outbound should open at noon).
- Increase HOV time windows i.e. 4AM-12 IN; 1:00-11PM OUT
- Open HOV earlier than 2 p.m. going out.
- HOV on weekends should follow same traffic patterns as the weekdays. AM inbound, PM outbound.

Support for Casual Carpoolers

- Stop Metro from trying to stop casual rides.
- Do NOT ban CASUAL CARPOOLS!
- Carpool is faster once reach downtown because car doesn't stop at every stop. Also, carpool sometimes takes you to your building.
- I would like to see some kind of casual carpool program on the outbound (evening) commute.
- Aggressively advertise carpooling options and availability.

Comments for TxDOT

- Would it possibly make sense to close some entrances of the freeway in order to maintain better mainlane flow?
- Barker Cypress south onto I-10 is horrible for people trying to access I-10 from the north because of Park Ten employees turning left. Off ramp from I-10 to Hwy 6 is not fluid @ all because of traffic mess. Worst problem of all is accessing Katy Frwy in AM.!
- Change on/off ramps so people cannot go to feeder then back onto the freeway at next entrance ramp. Somehow change entrance from Sam Houston Tollway and other entrance ramps on such a short distance

Most Frequent Comments by Mode

The following summary tables are an attempt to highlight the comments that were made most frequently by each mode: main lanes, HOV lane, transit, and casual carpool.

Table 24
Comment Summary of Commuters in Main Lanes

Comment Categories for Commuters in the Main Lanes (Top 89%)	No. of Comments Main Lanes	Percent of 1,528 Comments
Favor Rail for Corridor or In General	180	11.8%
Oppose Rail either METRO Rail or In General	10	<1%
General Comments, Not Specific	155	10.1%
Other Suggested Solutions	143	9.4%
Solutions to Expand the Freeway, Add Lanes	138	9.0%
Oppose QuickRide/Charging Tolls for Access HOV	115	7.5%
Favor QuickRide	51	3.3%
Favor HOV General Comments	80	5.2%
Oppose HOV	49	3.2%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	62	4.1%
Oppose SOV on HOV	40	2.6%
Restrictions on Truck Traffic	57	3.7%
Oppose Charging Tolls to Access Highway	51	3.3%
Police and Enforcement Issues	46	3.0%
Traffic is Horrible, Desperation but No Solution	45	2.9%
Need 2-Way HOV	38	2.5%
Subtotal	1,356	89%
Other Comments	172	11%
TOTAL Comments Main Lanes	1,528	100%

Summary of Comments - Main Lanes <i>QuickRide and SOV on HOV Lane</i>	No. of Comments Main Lanes	Percent of 1,528 Comments
Favor QuickRide	51	3.3%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	62	4.1%
In Favor Comments	113	7.4%
Oppose QuickRide	115	7.5%
Oppose Charging Tolls to Access Highway	51	3.3%
Oppose SOV on HOV	40	2.6%
Oppose Comments	206	13.5%

Table 25
Comment Summary of Commuters in HOV Lane

Comment Categories for Commuters in the HOV Lane (Top 90%)	No. of Comments HOV Lanes	Percent of 521 Comments
Oppose SOV on HOV	65	12.5%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	8	1.5%
Oppose QuickRide/Charging Tolls for Access HOV	61	11.7%
Favor QuickRide	18	3.5%
Favor HOV General Comments	58	11.1%
Oppose HOV	2	0.4%
Police and Enforcement Issues	51	9.8%
Favor Rail for Corridor or In General	47	9.0%
Oppose Rail either METRO Rail or In General	3	0.6%
General Comments, Not Specific	34	6.5%
Other Suggested Solutions	23	4.4%
METRO Comments	20	3.8%
Solutions to Expand the Freeway, Add Lanes	19	3.6%
Reliability Issues on HOV	14	2.7%
Vehicle Eligibility on HOV	13	2.5%
Safety Issues about the HOV Lane or Diamond Lanes	12	2.3%
Extend QuickRide or HOV Hours	11	2.1%
Need 2-Way HOV	11	2.1%
Subtotal	470	90%
Other Comments	51	10%
TOTAL Comments HOV Lane	521	100%

Summary of Comments - HOV Lane <i>QuickRide and SOV on HOV Lane</i>	No. of Comments HOV Lanes	Percent of 521 Comments
Favor QuickRide	18	3.5%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	8	1.5%
In Favor Comments	26	5.0%
Oppose QuickRide or Charging Toll for Access HOV	61	11.7%
Oppose Charging Tolls to Access Highway	9	1.7%
Oppose SOV on HOV	65	12.5%
Oppose Comments	135	25.9%

Table 26
Comment Summary of Transit Riders

Comment Categories for Commuters using Transit (Top 93%)	No. of Comments Transit	Percent of 392 Comments
METRO Comments	126	32.1%
Favor Rail for Corridor or In General	38	9.7%
Oppose Rail either METRO Rail or In General	1	0.3%
Favor HOV General Comments	29	7.4%
Oppose HOV	1	0.3%
Oppose SOV on HOV	26	6.6%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	4	1.0%
General Comments, Not Specific	22	5.6%
Oppose QuickRide/Charging Tolls for Access HOV	21	5.4%
Favor QuickRide	6	1.5%
Reliability Issues on HOV	18	4.6%
Need 2-Way HOV	18	4.6%
Police and Enforcement Issues	11	2.8%
Other Suggested Solutions	11	2.8%
Extend QuickRide or HOV Hours	9	2.3%
Favor Diamond Lanes	6	1.5%
Oppose Diamond Lanes	3	0.8%
Solutions to Expand the Freeway, Add Lanes	6	1.5%
Traffic is Horrible, Desperation but No Solution	6	1.5%
Oppose Charging Tolls to Access Highway	5	1.3%
Subtotal	365	93%
Other Comments	27	7%
TOTAL Comments Transit	392	100%

Summary of Comments - Transit <i>QuickRide and SOV on HOV Lane</i>	No. of Comments Transit	Percent of 392 Comments
Favor QuickRide	6	1.5%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	4	1.0%
In Favor Comments	10	2.6%
Oppose QuickRide or Charging Toll for Access HOV	21	5.4%
Oppose Charging Tolls to Access Highway	5	1.3%
Oppose SOV on HOV	26	6.6%
Oppose Comments	52	13.3%

Table 27
Comment Summary of Casual Carpoolers

Comment Categories for Commuters by Casual Carpool (Top 93%)	No. of Comments Casual Carpool	Percent of 235 Comments
METRO Comments	61	26.0%
Support Casual Carpool as a Mode Choice	28	11.9%
Oppose SOV on HOV	23	9.8%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	3	1.3%
Oppose QuickRide/Charging Tolls for Access HOV	17	7.2%
Favor QuickRide	3	1.3%
Favor Rail for Corridor or In General	16	6.8%
Oppose Rail either METRO Rail or In General	0	0.0%
Favor HOV General Comments	14	6.0%
Oppose HOV	0	0.0%
Police and Enforcement Issues	10	4.3%
Need 2-Way HOV	10	4.3%
Other Suggested Solutions	8	3.4%
Reliability Issues on HOV	7	3.0%
Traffic is Horrible, Desperation but No Solution	7	3.0%
General Comments, Not Specific	6	2.6%
Solutions to Expand the Freeway, Add Lanes	6	2.6%
Subtotal	219	93%
Other Comments	16	7%
TOTAL Comments Casual Carpools	235	100%

Summary of Comments – Casual Carpoolers <i>QuickRide and SOV on HOV Lane</i>	No. of Comments Casual Carpool	Percent of 235 Comments
Favor QuickRide	3	1.3%
Favor SOV on HOV Lane	3	1.3%
In Favor Comments	6	2.6%
Oppose QuickRide or Charging Toll for Access HOV	17	7.2%
Oppose Charging Tolls to Access Highway	0	0.0%
Oppose SOV on HOV	23	9.8%
Oppose Comments	40	17.0%

SUGGESTED STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION

The following are strategies suggested for announcing changes to the QuickRide program in order to encourage support and mitigate opposition. The recommendations are based on interpretation of the written comments and survey responses to the QuickRide non-user survey of commuters in November 2003.

Seize the Opportunity

Changes in the QuickRide operation should be announced as action to manage travel demand in the HOV lane to improve effectiveness and to make a proactive effort to address congestion. Changes in the QuickRide program are innovative solutions in response to commuter frustration and the need for action. Changes in QuickRide are positive reactions to the need for alternatives to manage travel demand. QuickRide is an opportunity to improve travel for as many commuters as possible by maximizing person movement using congestion pricing.

The explanations for QuickRide changes should be reported in terms of the benefits to be gained for all modes of commuters.

Surprise No One

The expectation for change should be developed to minimize or eliminate surprise. The survey was a good first step. Thirty percent of commuters during peak periods received a survey – an announcement of change. Twenty-one percent of those receiving a survey completed the questionnaire and have a very good idea of the changes under consideration. Fifty-four percent of those who completed the survey took advantage of the opportunity to write out feelings of support or opposition to the survey. The 1,888 commuters who wrote comments are invested in what may be coming.

Additional public information should be released to reinforce the survey messages and to add public recognition of the changes in QuickRide. As the specifics of the change are known, information should be released to the public and specifically to commuters along the affected freeway(s). No surprises. Additional opportunities to ask questions and make comments are desirable.

Demonstrate Agency Cooperation

If possible, representatives of all public agencies involved in transportation operations and management should participate and speak-out in announcements and discussions of the changes in QuickRide. This should include at a minimum METRO, TxDOT, and the City of Houston and if possible, Harris County and HCTRA. Commuters are not always clear on what agency is responsible for either the HOV lanes or QuickRide. The best advantage is if all agencies support the purpose of QuickRide.

Explain, Explain, Explain

All public information should state with as clear a message as possible the purpose of QuickRide, the expected outcomes for changes in the QuickRide program, and the benefits to be gained by commuters as a result of QuickRide. General media information should complement direct information to the commuters on the affected freeway(s). Given the sensitivity to regional transportation issues, the reaction to changes in QuickRide may not be limited to the target markets on only the affected freeway(s).

The public information about QuickRide should include general evidence of the utilization and person movement in HOV lanes in general. Probably most people do not realize 37 percent of peak period commuters on the Katy and Northwest Freeways commute by carpool/vanpool or transit!

One of the greatest fears of those who oppose SOV access to the HOV lane is concern about causing congestion of a priority use lane. The explanations about QuickRide should explain what time of day and under what circumstances SOV vehicles will be given access to the HOV lane. An assurance that free flow will be maintained in the HOV lane at all times should be included.

The written comments to the survey (of QuickRide non-users) demonstrate many commuters do not have confidence in the ability of the sponsoring agencies to manage and enforce additional HOV lane restrictions and, in particular, to manage variable pricing. Information about technology to implement variable pricing and to monitor enforcement will be critical for credibility. The public information should be explained in layman's terms, surely, but explained.

The purpose and intended use of the QuickRide toll revenues should be explained as soon as possible.

Manage Expectations

In the best of circumstances, there will be days when the HOV lane will be congested due to an incident or some problem with technology. Acknowledge the types of problems that may occur and provide reassurances of the commitment to resolve problems as quickly as possible.

Individuals or groups who oppose the changes in QuickRide may demand data or statistics that "prove" the demand exists, there is capacity for additional vehicles, and how congestion in the HOV lane will be managed. This data is available -- the challenge is how to explain highly complicated data, and the risk is an expectation to prove success -- or justify inability to meet expectations. The description of expectations should take into account the risk. The changes in QuickRide are innovative -- and for that reason we can expect some bumps and need to make adjustments.